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UNICEF seeks \$1.2 billion to aid women and children caught in world's worst crises



A Haitian boy receives treatment at an ad hoc medical clinic at MINUSTAH

4 February 2010 – The United Nations Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**) today launched an appeal for \$1.2 billion to help provide life-saving emergency support to women and children impacted by the most severe humanitarian crises around the world, including the Haitian earthquake.

The appeal is part of UNICEF’s Humanitarian Action Report 2010, released in Geneva today, which spotlights the desperate situation of children and women in 28 countries and territories facing deep humanitarian crises.

UNICEF **said** Haiti was one of the countries it classified as ‘in crisis’ prior to the 7.0-magnitude quake struck on 12 January, killing up to 200,000 people, leaving around 2 million in need of aid and reducing much of the Caribbean country’s infrastructure to rubble.

“Faced with multiple hurricanes, in addition to civil unrest, the country was [already] in need of humanitarian assistance,” said UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Hilde F. Johnson.

“The earthquake is a horrific example of another double disaster, destroying the lives and livelihoods of the Haitian people and crippling the very infrastructure and systems needed for humanitarian actions to be effective,” said Ms. Johnson.

“But we are achieving results,” she noted. “This week, UNICEF and partners will begin a campaign aimed at immunizing 500,000 children under the age of seven against measles, diphtheria and tetanus.”

Ms. Johnson added that as the agency scales up the delivery of aid and protection for every child in Haiti, UNICEF is still involved in providing humanitarian assistance all over the world.

"Children are suffering in many different places, and for a range of reasons," she said. "They all need our help."

Every year, UNICEF responds to 200 emergencies all over the world, with 2009 witnessing repeated large-scale natural and man-made disasters in South-East Asia while emergencies in the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) intensified, she said.

"Children are always among the most severely affected, and disasters put them at increased risk of abuse and grave violations of their rights, including sexual violence, killing and maiming, and forced recruitment into armed groups."

The report placed the 28 countries on its list on the basis of the scale and chronic or protracted nature of the crisis, the severity of its impact on children and women, and the potential to bring about life-saving results.

In these cases, urgent action is imperative to save lives, ensure access to safe water, adequate sanitation and hygiene, health, nutrition and to protect children against the worst forms of violence and abuse, and to provide children with an education even under the worst of circumstances, UNICEF stressed.

The report noted that the greatest needs are still in sub-Saharan Africa, where in 2009 some 24 million people in the Horn of Africa alone were affected by drought, chronic food insecurity and armed conflict.

"Together with its partners, UNICEF continues to search for innovative ways to meet the desperate needs of children and women caught up in emergencies," said Ms. Johnson. "Only by working together can we effectively deliver on our mission to promote and protect children's rights, help meet their basic needs and enable them to reach their full potential."

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